

Rachel Renée Russell

DORK *diaries*

once upon a dork



Tales from a not-so-fabulous life



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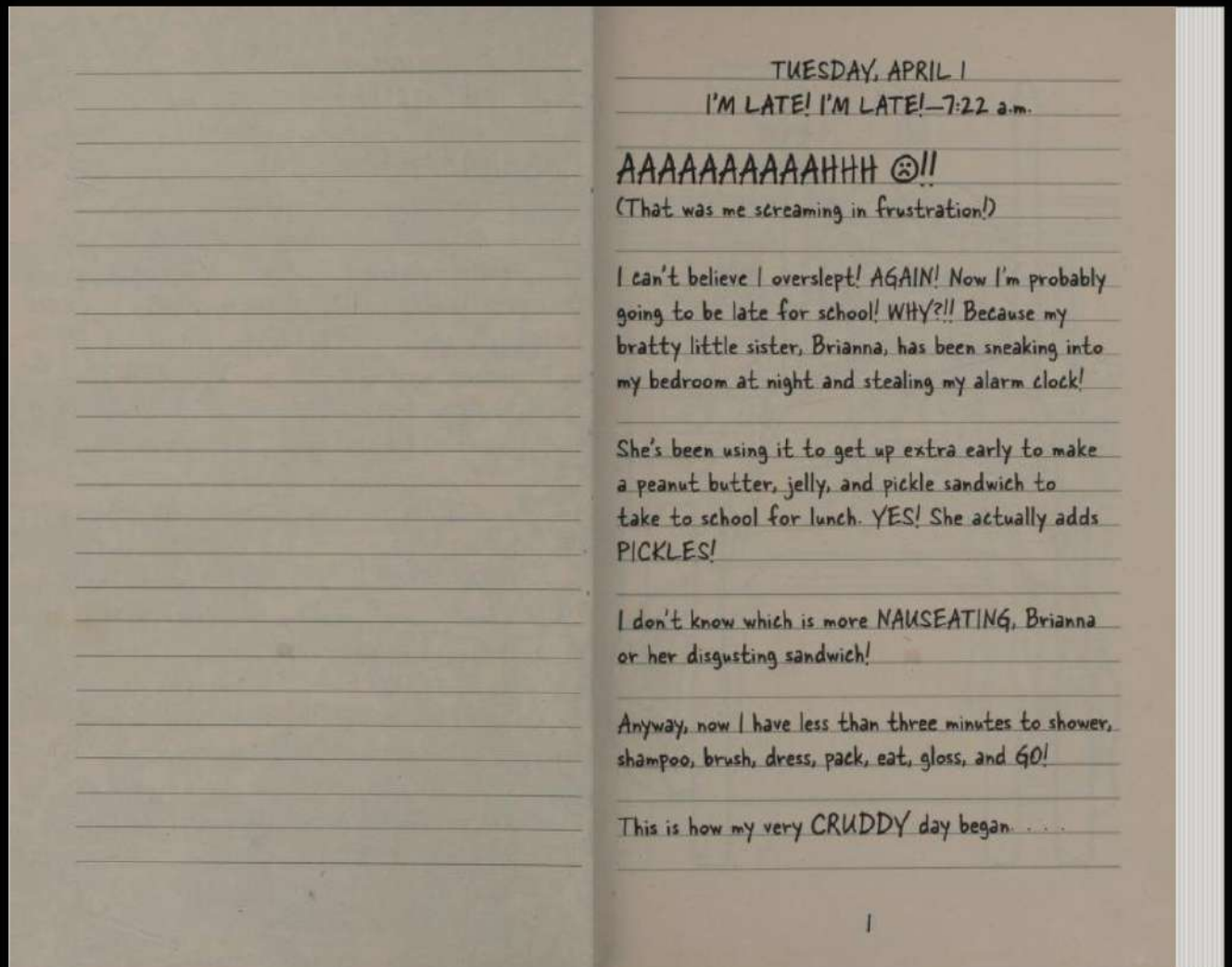




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OMG!! I got dressed for school in two minutes and nineteen seconds! Which is probably a NEW late-for-school world record!!

I decided to wear my brand-new sweater with the cool fringe on it. It took me TWO whole months to save up to buy it from SWEET 16, a trendy teen store in the mall.

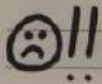
Looking back on my morning, there was definitely GOOD NEWS and BAD NEWS.

The GOOD NEWS . . . ?

My day had gotten off to such a HORRIBLE start. I was absolutely SURE there was NO WAY things could get any WORSE ☹!

The BAD NEWS . . . ?

I was TOTALLY WRONG about the GOOD NEWS!



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BREAKFAST BATTLE—7:25 a.m.

OMG! I was so TICKED OFF at Brianna for swiping my alarm clock that smoke was practically spewing out of my EARS!! . . .

GRRRRR!!



I wanted to stuff her in a big box and ship her off to Princess Sugar Plum Island to be the pooper-scooper for all those cute little baby unicorns she loves so much.

"Brianna! Did you take my clock again?!" I yelled. "If I'm late for school, it's all YOUR fault!"

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"I didn't take your clock. Miss Penelope did! She thinks you need all the BEAUTY SLEEP you can get! Have you looked in the mirror lately?" Brianna said, sticking her tongue out at me.

"Miss Penelope THINKS I need beauty sleep?! Sorry, Brianna, but Miss Penelope CAN'T think. She doesn't have a BRAIN! She's a hand puppet!" I shot back.

"She does TOO have a brain!" Brianna shouted. "She says she can go to puppet school to get smarter, but YOU need to go on that TV show Ugly Face Intervention!"

I was like, Oh. No. She DIDN'T 😞!!! I could NOT believe Miss Penelope was talking TRASH about me like that. SHE was going to need an intervention!! After I took a pen and drew her a mustache. THEN we'd see whose FACE was the most messed up, MINE or HERS!

Anyway, Brianna was at the kitchen table, slopping together peanut butter, jelly, and pickles to make her very disgusting sandwich. . . .

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BRIANNA, BUSY MAKING
A DISGUSTING PBJ & P SANDWICH!

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"Would you like me to make one for you, Nikki? It's yummy! SEE?" Brianna said, shoving her sandwich right in my face.

I cringed at the slimy, drippy mess. . . .



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EW! It SMELLED even worse than it looked. Kind of like peanut butter, jelly, and, um . . . rancid pickle juice ☹!

"Um . . . no thanks!" I muttered, totally grossed out.

"Come on. Just take one bite!!" Brianna said, waving it under my nose. "You'll LOVE it!"

"No, Brianna! Actually, I'm not hungry anymore! I took one look at your sandwich and COMPLETELY lost my appetite!!"

"Are you SURE? It's awesomely delicious!" She giggled.

I just rolled my eyes at that girl.

What part of the word "NO" did she NOT understand?!

I wanted to scream, Sorry, Brianna, but . . .

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I will not eat it with a *DOG!*
I will not eat it with a *FROG!*

I will not eat it with a *CAT!*
I will not eat it with a *RAT!*

I will not eat it in my *ROOM.*
On the *BUS.* Or on the *MOON!*

I will not eat it *NORTH* or *SOUTH!*
It made me throw up in my *MOUTH!*

Call me *PICKY!* Call me *FICKLE!*
I *DON'T* like *PBJ* and *PICKLES* @!!!

Anyway, Brianna went to the fridge to get a juice box, and I gathered my stuff and was about to head out the door, when suddenly she came charging at me like an angry baby rhinoceros in pigtails.

SHE actually accused *ME* of taking her sandwich!

That's when we started yelling at each other.

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BRIANNA, ACCUSING ME OF SWIPING HER
YUCK-A-LICIOUS SANDWICH!!

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"My sandwich is missing, and YOU took it!"

"Brianna! I wouldn't feed that nasty sandwich to my WORST ENEMY!"

And by worst enemy, I meant people like . . . well, you know . . .

MACKENZIE HOLLISTER ☹!!

Although, now that I think about it, I probably WOULD feed that sandwich to my worst enemy.

I'd LOVE to just shove it right down her throat!

Just kidding ☺!

NOT ☹!!

Actually, I really am kidding ☺!

I try to be friendly and get along with EVERYONE at my school. But for some reason, MacKenzie HATES MY GUTS!!

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Anyway, by the time I finally left for school, Brianna was busy making another sandwich.

It's like, the older she gets, the more BRATTY she becomes.

I think it's time for me to have a very serious talk with my mom and dad about their parenting skills.

WHY?

Because I'm really SICK and TIRED of Brianna . . .

1. taking my stuff without permission (like my clock!).

2. stealing my cell phone to play the Princess Sugar Plum games and running down my battery.

3. waking me up in the middle of the night to take her to the bathroom, by jumping up and down on my bed (while I'm still in it ☹!!). . . .

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BRIANNA, WAKING ME UP
IN A VERY RUDE MANNER!!

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It's absolutely vital that my parents get professional help for Brianna before it's too late.

They let her get away with EVERYTHING! But when I ask to do stuff, it's always a big fat "NO!"

I was really looking forward to volunteering at the Fuzzy Friends Animal Rescue Center after school today with my crush, Brandon.

But my mom said I couldn't!

WHY?!! Because I have to babysit BRIANNA!

TYPICAL ☹!!

It was kind of a big deal because this would have been my first time hanging out with Brandon since . . . well, you know!!

My very first KISS!!! SQUEEEEEEEEE!!! ☺!!

OMG! I was SO shocked when it happened! I thought I was going to DIE!

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It was SO romantic!

Even though my eyes were open the entire time and practically bulging out of my head.

And after it was over, I hyperventilated!

Almost.

The only problem with the kiss is that it happened at a charity event to raise money for kids. So I don't know if Brandon did it because he actually likes me, or because he was just trying to save the needy children of the world.

Anyway, thanks to my KA-RAY-ZEE sister, I'm a nervous wreck and totally stressed out.

And my school day hasn't even started yet!

NOTE TO SELF: Get a NEW sister!!

☹!!

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LOCKER SHOCKER!—7:44 a.m.

I was happy and relieved that I actually made it to school on time.

In spite of my very cruddy morning, I'd made up my mind that I was going to have a really good day.

I was surprised that my new sweater got SO much attention.

As I was walking down the hall, practically EVERYONE stopped and stared. Even the GUYS!

And get this!! A few of the CCP (Cute, Cool & Popular) girls actually smiled, pointed, and whispered to each other.

It was quite obvious they were LOVING my new sweater!

I felt just like a fashion model walking the runway or something. . . .

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EVERYONE STARING AND POINTING AS
I STRUTTED DOWN THE HALL

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I was like, "Good morning, people! Please don't HATE on my FABULOUS sweater!!" But I just said that inside my head, so no one heard it but me.

When I got to my locker, I put my stuff away and was about to write a quick entry in my diary.

I was feeling REALLY happy about my life right then ☺!

I wasn't even that mad at Brianna anymore. Hey, she's ONLY a little kid! When I was her age, I was WAY more annoying.

Suddenly I noticed MacKenzie staring at me like I was a . . . two-headed, um . . . SQUIRREL or something. But I just ignored her like I always do.

Then she shrieked, "OMG, NIKKI! WHERE DID YOU GET THAT SWEATER?!!"

Which was the STUPIDEST question EVER! That girl has the IQ of a wad of chewed bubble gum! . . .

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MACKENZIE

WAD OF GUM



=



I just glared at her and calmly answered, "I got my sweater from a STORE. You know, where YOU buy stuff, like your HAIR and your TAN."

Mackenzie was obviously **INSANELY** jealous of my fabulous new sweater.

And she just couldn't deal with the fact that MY outfit was way CUTER than HER outfit.

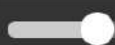
Then she pointed at me and snickered. . . .

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"UM . . . NIKKI, ARE YOU TRYING TO MAKE A FASHION STATEMENT? OR HAVE YOU JUST BEEN EATING OUT OF THE GARBAGE AGAIN?"

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That's when I finally looked down at my sweater.
Plastered across the front of it was . . .



Brianna's missing sandwich 😞!!

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I dropped my diary and just STARED in HORROR!!

No wonder I had gotten so many stares from other students in the hall. But, unfortunately, they hadn't been ADMIRING my new sweater.

That's when I noticed that MacKenzie and practically EVERYONE in the hall were pointing and laughing at me.

Like I was some kind of . . .

FREAK!

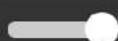
Then MacKenzie glared at me and snarled, "Hey, Nikki, would you like some FLIES with that sandwich?! Oops, I mean FRIES!"

And everyone laughed even harder!

I could NOT believe this was actually happening to me.

I just stood there with my mouth dangling wide open.

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It was like I was waiting for a SUPERlever comeback to crawl up my throat and jump right into MacKenzie's face.

But I couldn't think of a single thing to say to her.

So I just mumbled, "Whatever."

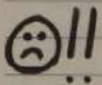
OMG! I felt SO humiliated!

And embarrassed.

And **STUPID!**

Blinking back my tears, I picked up my diary and shoved it into my backpack.

Then I slammed my locker door shut and took off running down the hall.



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PAINFUL STAINS!—7:50 a.m.

AAAAAAAAAAHHH!!!

(That was me screaming in frustration! AGAIN @!!)

I've just had the **WORST. MORNING. EVER!!** And right now I'm hiding out in the girls' bathroom.

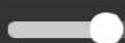
I **STILL** cannot believe that huge **FIASCO** with MacKenzie! And with Brianna's sandwich!

The only logical explanation is that the sandwich probably got stuck on my coat when I tossed it on the kitchen table this morning.

And then, when I put on my coat, it somehow attached itself to the front of my sweater. Like some kind of, um . . . **SUPERfreaky, sticky, slimy . . . ALIEN . . . CREATURE!!**

I wanted to rush to the nearest emergency room and **BEG** the doctors for yet another life-saving medical procedure!!

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"DOCTORS, PLEASE HELP ME! CAN YOU
SURGICALLY REMOVE THIS SANDWICH?!"

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So Brianna was right. I DID steal her nasty sandwich!

Accidentally ☹!

Anyway, I'm in the bathroom, trying desperately to
wipe all the stains off my sweater.

But the situation is hopeless!

I look just like one of Brianna's UGLY finger
paintings.

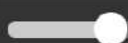
Because now I'm completely covered with:

1. brown peanut-butter stains
2. purple jelly stains
3. white soap suds

AND

4. bright fluorescent-green hand soap from the
girls' bathroom.

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ME, STARING IN THE MIRROR AND
HAVING A COMPLETE MELTDOWN OVER
THE STAINS ON MY SWEATER!

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OMG! It looked like someone had SNARFED down
a cafeteria lunch of tuna casserole, green peas,
blueberry pie, and chocolate milk.

And then THREW UP all over my sweater!!

TWICE 😞!!

I felt absolutely HORRIBLE!

Suddenly, big fat tears started to roll down my
cheeks.

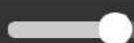
But it wasn't because I was SUPERupset (which
I WAS)!

My eyes were just burning really badly from the
putrid stench of pickle juice. Unfortunately, adding
water to the mix had made the noxious odor ten
times stronger.

That's when I started to cry for real!

My entire school thinks I'm just a huge JOKE!

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My favorite sweater (which I had saved up for TWO whole months to buy!!) was TOTALLY RUINED!!!

AND I smelled like a HUMAN PICKLE with very bad body odor!!!

It was ALL Brianna's fault!! Mostly.

Actually, I don't know who makes my life more miserable, MACKENZIE or BRIANNA!

Thank goodness I had my Sassy Sasha perfume with me. I sprayed on practically half the bottle.

So NOW I smell like . . . (*SNIFF SNIFF*) . . .

A PICKLE marinated in Sassy Sasha perfume!!

JUST GREAT ☹!!

Sorry, Brianna! But I'm starting to wish you were NEVER born!

☹!!

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HIDING OUT IN ENGLISH CLASS—8:05 a.m.

In English class, I slouched down in my chair and tried to hide behind my textbook. The last thing I needed was the entire class staring at my hideous stained sweater.

Soon my English teacher came staggering into the class, carrying a massive four-inch-thick book.

She dropped it onto her desk with a loud THUMP!

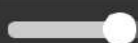
The kids in the front row coughed and fanned the dust cloud it created.

I couldn't help but notice that the ancient book smelled like mildew, fish sticks, and sweaty gym socks.

It smelled as AWFUL as I felt!

Which was a pretty amazing coincidence, when you think about it.

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"Good morning, class!" My teacher beamed happily. "Instead of discussing the use of symbolism in our *Grapes of Wrath* novel as originally planned, today we're going to have some fun! So please put away your books."

Everyone happily tossed their *Grapes of Wrath* books on the floor, including me.

Our teacher continued.

"I was cleaning out my attic yesterday and found this awesome treasure!" she exclaimed. "This book of fairy tales belonged to my grandmother and was my favorite book as a child! Fairy tales are an entertaining and fascinating genre in literature."

She picked up the big book and blew the dust off the cover.

Then she proudly held it up for the entire class to see. . . .

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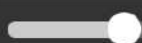


MY TEACHER, SHOWING OFF HER
DUSTY OLD BOOK OF FAIRY TALES

"This book actually inspired me to give YOU a creative writing project today!" she explained.

The entire class groaned, including me.

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"Come on, people! This is going to be fun, I promise. Now take out your journals."

I grabbed my English notebook and tried to find a page that wasn't already covered with sketches or doodles.

"I want each of you to rewrite your favorite fairy tale with your own personal twist! It'll be due tomorrow at the end of class. And to get your creative juices flowing, we're going to warm up with a few creative writing exercises.

"A fairy tale is a fictional story that is usually based on folkloric characters such as fairies, goblins, elves, trolls, witches, giants, and talking animals. These stories have their roots in oral traditions, and very similar stories are found in many cultures around the world.

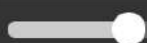
"Every fairy tale has a main character, or protagonist, who is usually a good person. There is often royalty, like a prince, princess, and king and/or queen. Now, for your creative writing exercise,

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I want you to fill your journals with ideas for your main character for the next ten minutes. . . ."



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"Now let's get started! Try to use some of the ideas from your writing exercises. And feel free to come up and take a look at my book of fairy tales!"

I had to admit, those writing exercises were a lot of fun. I had a ton of great ideas! But I had a really hard time coming up with a story.

I looked around, and the entire room was buzzing with excitement. It seemed everyone was talking about their ideas for their fairy tales.

We were supposed to be brainstorming. But, unfortunately, my brain was farting. I was getting nothing but air.

I've always considered myself a very creative and talented writer. Because, come on, I'm totally addicted to writing in my diary!

But this SUPEReasy, no-rules project was giving me serious anxiety.

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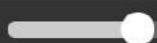
That's when I decided to take a look at the fairy tale book to get a few ideas.

My teacher was right! Her book was pretty
AWESOME. . . .



ME, TOTALLY LOST IN THE
FASCINATING FAIRY TALE WORLD!

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By the end of the hour, everyone was busy writing . . . except ME 😞!

Instead, I had spent the entire class completely absorbed in an exciting fairy tale adventure.

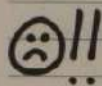
Reading about tearjerking love stories and thrilling adventures was a great escape from my OWN very MUNDANE and extremely CRUDDY existence.

But I still didn't have the slightest idea what I was going to write. I left class more frustrated and discouraged than ever.

I trudged off to my French class, hugging my books, trying to hide the nasty stain on my sweater.

But kids still pointed at me and snickered.

Right now I feel HORRIBLE! Sometimes I wish I could wave a magic wand and disappear!



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CRITICAL CRUSH CRISIS—10:55 a.m.

After my French and social studies classes were finally over, I went back to my locker to wait for my BFFs, Chloe and Zoey.

We meet there every day to walk together to gym class. I was surprised when Brandon rushed up to me.

"Hi, Nikki! I've been looking for you all morning. I hope you got my texts! And, um . . . WOW! What happened to your sweater?!"

"What's up, Brandon? I just had a little accident. With a sandwich. But I'm fine. So, you sent me a text?"

"Yeah. Actually, I sent you three. They were pretty important! The journalism camp I'm going to this summer has an opening for a cartoonist. I guess someone from another school canceled."

"Really? That sounds, um . . . interesting," I said, trying to be coolly nonchalant.

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BRANDON AND ME, DISCUSSING GOING TO
SUMMER CAMP TOGETHER ☺!!

But in the deepest depths of my inner soul, I was
literally screaming . . .

OMG! OMG! I COULD JUST DIE AT THE THOUGHT
OF POSSIBLY SPENDING THE ENTIRE SUMMER
HANGING OUT AT CAMP WITH BRANDON,

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TAKING LONG, ROMANTIC WALKS THROUGH THE
WOODS HAND IN HAND, BREATHLESSLY GAZING
INTO EACH OTHER'S EYES WHILE BEING EATEN
ALIVE BY MOSQUITOES!! SQUEEEEEEE ☺!!

"Nikki, Mr. Zimmerman said he wants to add a
comic strip to our school newspaper. And he's willing
to pay for either you or MacKenzie to go to camp,
since you're both talented artists. Anyway, I was
hoping it was YOU who signed up, because it looks
like the spot has already been—"

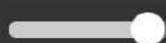
"Hold on, Brandon. Let me check my phone. Now
that I think about it, I haven't gotten ANYTHING
from ANYONE all morning, which is VERY strange."

That's when I took out my cell phone to check my
calls and messages. And Brandon suddenly got this
really puzzled look on his face.

"So, where did you get your phone case? It's
definitely very, um . . . different!" he asked.

"Actually, I got it last month at the mall."

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BRANDON, WONDERING WHAT'S UP
WITH MY PHONE!

However, when I tried to retrieve the text messages
Brandon had sent me, I had two small problems. . . .

First, my cell phone battery was completely DEAD!
Which meant Brianna was playing the Princess Sugar
Plum games on it without my permission. AGAIN! @!!

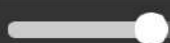
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Second, my eyes were about to rupture and BLEED
from the terribly tacky self-portrait she had
drawn on my PHONE with a black marker @!!!



ME, IN SHOCK AT WHAT
BRIANNA HAD DONE TO MY POOR PHONE!!

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But the most disappointing thing was that because I never got Brandon's text messages, MacKenzie will probably be the one spending the summer at camp with Brandon, being eaten alive by mosquitoes, not ME @!!

I was CRUSHED! And Brandon was pretty bummed about it too.

Although I felt like crying (AGAIN!), I plastered a big smile across my face and told him how much I appreciated him texting me the camp information, even though I never got a chance to read it because my phone battery was dead.

He kind of shrugged and stuck his hands in his pockets. "Hey, no problem. I guess there's always next year. Right? Anyway, I'll see you in bio."

"Sure. And thanks again," I said as he headed down the hall.

I sighed in frustration and then collapsed against my locker.

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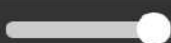
It looks like my day is getting CRUDDIER and CRUDDIER by the hour.

Seriously!

I don't know how much more of this DRAMA I can take!!



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PITY PARTY WITH MY BFFS—10:58 a.m.

Good news! I've **FINALLY** come up with a brilliant plan for how to fix my stained sweater situation.

After gym, I plan to go to the office and call my mom to come pick me up and take me home.

Then I'll take a quick shower so I won't smell like Sassy Sasha and pickle juice.

And after I've changed my clothes, I plan to bury my sweater in the backyard!

If I hurry, I might actually make it back to school in time for bio and get to see Brandon again ☺!

One thing is for sure, I don't know how I would make it at this school without my BFFs, Chloe and Zoey!

No matter how bad I'm feeling, they always manage to make me laugh and lift my spirits. And today was no different.

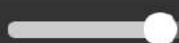
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I told them about all the drama with Brianna, MacKenzie, and Brandon. And then I showed them my messed-up sweater and the graffiti on my phone case. They just stared at me in horror.

ME, SHOWING MY HORRIFIED BFFS
MY MESSED-UP SWEATER
AND THE GRAFFITI ON MY PHONE!

Chloe said, "OMG, Nikki! You poor thing! I feel SO sorry for you!"

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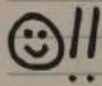


And Zoey said, "When things are bad, we take a bit of comfort in the thought that they could always be WORSE. And when they are, we find hope in the thought that things are so bad they have to get BETTER."—Malcolm S. Forbes."

Then they both gave me a BIG hug!

So right now I'm feeling a lot better.

Chloe and Zoey are the BEST friends EVER!!!



56

THE PERILS OF P.E.—11:05 a.m.

I could hardly wait for gym to be over so I could finally go home and change.

As we were finishing up our warm-up exercises, our teacher disappeared into the storage closet.

That meant only one thing! We were going to be doing some type of activity with a ball!

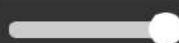
JUST GREAT ☺!

She was going to emerge with a basketball, soccer ball, volleyball, baseball, or maybe a football.

Sorry, but I was starving! The only ball I wanted to get up close and personal with right then was a juicy meatball or a savory cheese ball. YUM!!

Unfortunately, my food fantasy was rudely interrupted when the teacher blew her whistle and announced the most HATED gym class activity known to humankind. . . .

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Then our teacher threw the balls out on the gym floor and the game began. All the athletic kids immediately scrambled for a ball.

Being the first person out is the ultimate humiliation.

Everyone jeers and makes the L for "loser" sign with their fingers while you slowly do your "walk of shame" to the bleachers.

I wasn't about to let that happen to me!

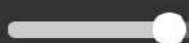
AGAIN!!

But just in case it DID, I had tucked my diary and pen inside my shirt so I could make good use of my downtime on the bleachers.

I immediately noticed Jessica staring at me the way a hungry snake stares at a mouse. And YIKES! Unfortunately for me, she had a ball in her hands.

Suddenly she took off running toward me.

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I bobbed and weaved through the cross fire of flying balls like a pro until she somehow trapped me in a corner.

"Ha! There's nowhere to run now!" She grinned. "Eat rubber, DORK!"

She threw the ball at me, but I ducked just in the nick of time. As the ball ricocheted off the wall, her eyes got as large as saucers.

"UH-OH!" she whimpered, and quickly turned to try to run away.

But the ball smacked her right on her butt!

WHOP!!

"You're OUT! You're OUT!" a boy cried gleefully as he pointed at her.

"YES!!" I shouted in triumph as I did my Snoopy "happy dance" right there on the gym floor.

60

Jessica was the FIRST person out of the game!!

While the other kids taunted Jessica, I leaned against the wall to catch my breath. Chloe and Zoey excitedly ran up to me and gave me high fives.

"OMG!" Chloe cried. "I thought Jessica had you for sure!"

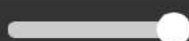
"Nikki, just take deep breaths," Zoey huffed. "You sound like you're hyperventilating!"

"I'm f-f-fine!" I panted. "But that was close! I thought I was DEAD!"

We'd only been standing there for a few seconds. Then, before I could even scream "WATCH OUT!!" a group of jocks started whipping balls at us like we were giant teddy bears in a carnival arcade game or something.

OMG! We could feel the rush of cool air as the balls whizzed by, just missing our heads.

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Chloe, Zoey, and I just FROZE like deer in headlights. . . .



ME AND MY BFFS, GETTING AMBUSHED!

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"Well, girlfriends! It's the three of us against the world! And, personally, I think we're **DOOMED!**" Chloe groaned.

"Come on, guys! Don't give up yet!" Zoey said. "If we're moving targets, they'll have a harder time hitting us. **SCATTER!** And whatever you do, **DON'T. STOP. RUNNING!**"

So we took off in different directions, running around the gym like headless chickens.

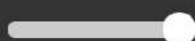
We ran in circles, zigzags, and swirls. And that strategy really seemed to work.

Because somehow my BFFs and I managed to survive the game. Soon it was down to just the three of us and a few others.

This was the longest we had **EVER** lasted!

That's when we started to really get into the game. We were running, catching, throwing, and dodging like Olympians. It was actually a lot of fun! . . .

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ME AND MY BFFS, HAVING A BLAST
PLAYING DODGEBALL ☺!!

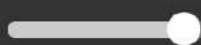
64

Until MacKenzie suddenly appeared out of nowhere
and screamed . . .

"HEY, MAXWELL! EAT THIS!"



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Once upon a dork





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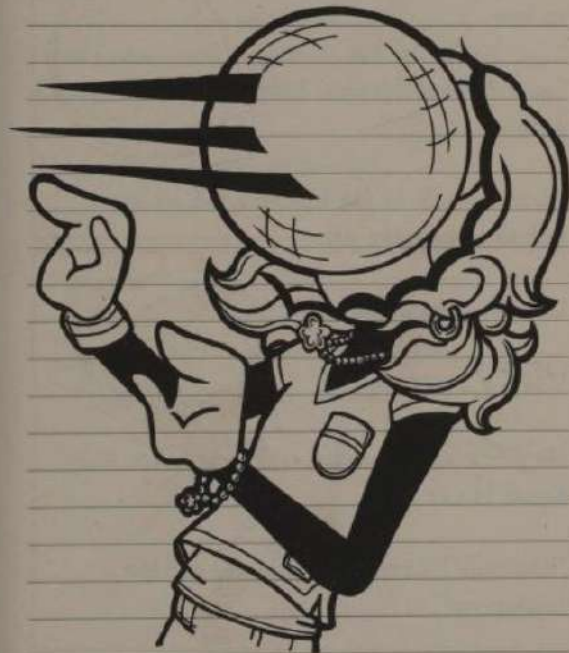
She threw the ball at me as hard as she could! . . .



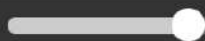
66

And then . . .

WHAM!



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Once upon a dork





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**OMG!**

I got hit right in the face!!!

It felt like that ball was going one hundred miles an hour.

Suddenly everything was hazy and in slow motion.

I tried to walk to the bleachers, but my legs felt all squishy, like jelly.

Something was wrong.

VERY wrong!

My BFFs' voices sounded really, really far away, almost like an echo.

"Nikkiiiiiiii!" Zoey cried. "Someone get the teacherrrrr!"

68

"Oh noooooo!" Chloe screamed. "I think she's huuuurt! HeIIlllp!"

My head was spinning like crazy!

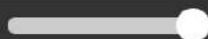
And so was the room!

That's when I lost my balance and felt myself falling.

Then everything went pitch-black.

☹!!

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DESCENDING INTO THE DEEPEST
DEPTHS OF DARKNESS

When I finally opened my eyes, I was surrounded by darkness.

I was completely disoriented and had the weirdest sensation of intense butterflies in my stomach. It was the same exact feeling you get on a roller coaster.

It actually felt like I was . . . falling?!

YES! That was it!!

OH, CRUD!!!

I was FALLING!!!

And falling . . .

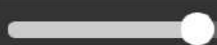
And falling . . .

And FALLING ☹!! . . .

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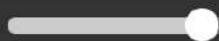
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Once upon a dork





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SOMEPLACE REALLY WEIRD!!

The only thing I knew for sure was that I WASN'T sure about ANYTHING anymore.

I wasn't sure if I was actually AWAKE and just THOUGHT I was DREAMING! Or if I was actually DREAMING and just THOUGHT I was AWAKE!

I wasn't sure what was reality and what was fantasy.

I was asleep (I think) when suddenly I heard voices.

"Everyone stand back! Give her room to breathe!" said a guy whose voice I didn't recognize.

"Do you think she's still alive?" asked a girl.

"I'm not sure. She looks kind of dead to me. See how dull and lifeless her skin is?" another guy replied.

74

I was like, Sorry, dude! Unlike MacKenzie, I DON'T have a lifetime membership to You-Pay-We-Spray! tanning salon.

NOTE TO SELF: ALWAYS use blush and bronzing powder. Because you never know when you'll wake up surrounded by a group of insensitive beauty critics who mistake you for DEAD!

"Very good point," another girl agreed. "She looks DEAD to me, too!"

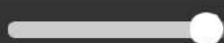
"Oh well! She's lucky the fall killed her BEFORE the Wicked Witch of the West did!" said the second guy.

"Hey, let's check her pockets for munchies!" suggested a third guy.

"Good idea!" the first guy exclaimed. "After all, dead people don't eat snacks. Usually."

Okay, this conversation was, like, way TOO weird!

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That's when I suddenly opened my eyes. I was completely surrounded by a group of blurry faces staring at me. . . .



A GROUP OF VERY STRANGE KIDS,
STARING AT ME AND MISTAKING ME
FOR DEAD!

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"Not so fast!" I shouted. "I'm NOT dead! YET!"

The startled group gasped and cautiously backed away from me.

Then they quietly whispered among themselves, "She's NOT dead?! Nope! Not dead at all!"

I slowly sat up and looked around. I was on the floor in the gym.

But I had no idea who those kids were.

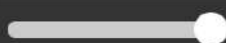
They were shorter than me, oddly dressed, and covered in . . . what looked like, um . . .

JUNK FOOD?!!

They had candy and popcorn stuck in their hair, chocolate and peanut butter smears on their clothing, and sticky hands and faces.

Those kids' clothing was covered in more food stains than my new sweater. . . .

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It was like I had single-handedly started a "sloppy chic" fashion craze.

"Well, dip my chip! She's ALIVE after all!" the first guy exclaimed as he gave me a warm smile. "This is awkward! Please accept our sincerest apologies."

78

"No problem," I muttered as I staggered to my feet, still slightly dizzy. "Ugh! I don't feel so good!"

"I know what will make you feel better!" a small girl said shyly. "How about a lollipop?"

Actually, that sounded like a great idea. I hadn't eaten all day, and I was starving.

The little girl pulled a sucker out of her dark curly hair and offered it to me.

At first glance, it looked like the candy was coated with powdered sugar. YUM!!

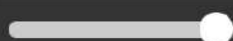
But upon closer inspection, I realized it was lint and dandruff!

With a few stray hairs!

EWW 😞!!

I plastered a big smile across my face to keep from gagging.

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MUNCHKIN GIRL, OFFERING ME
A HAIRY, LINTY, DANDRUFF-COVERED
LOLLIPOP!

"Gee, thanks, hon! But I just had lunch," I lied.

Then the entire group crowded around and
stared at me as they munched loudly on their
snacks. . . .

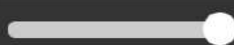
VERY STRANGE KIDS, STARING AT ME AS

80



THEY MUNCH ON SNACKS

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Once upon a dork

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"I'm Chip. Nice to meet you!" the first guy finally said, and extended his hand. It was greasy and covered with crumbled potato chips, but I shook it anyway.

"Hi, I'm Nikki! I'm glad to meet you and all of, um . . . your friends."

"It's a miracle you actually survived that ordeal!" Chip said, with a mouthful of chips.

I quickly glanced around the gym and realized I didn't see ANYONE from my P.E. class.

"Is my class already over? I've never seen any of you before. You must be sixth graders," I said.

What was going on?!

I vaguely remembered MacKenzie SLAMMING me in the face with a ball during a game of dodgeball. And me feeling faint and falling.

Chloe and Zoey had totally panicked and screamed for help and—

82

Wait a minute!! WHERE were Chloe and Zoey?!!

Had they just left me lying there on the floor and rushed off to their next class?!

Clearly, none of these people were in MY gym class. Heck, I didn't even recognize them as attending my SCHOOL!!

I suddenly felt woozy due to another dizzy spell. Where was the ding-dang school nurse when you really needed her?

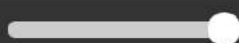
And, more important, where was my gym teacher?

Maybe she could explain what was going on. And give me a pass, since I was obviously late for lunch and possibly even bio.

As I slowly limped toward the gym door to leave, it felt like my entire face had been rearranged.

I probably had two black eyes, a busted lip, a chipped tooth, AND a broken nose @!!

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I was going straight to the office to call my parents to go HOME.

"Good-bye! And thank you for taking care of that evil witch for us! You're our HERO!" Chip cheered as the other students joined in.

I stopped in my tracks and slowly turned around.

"Um, WHAT evil witch? And HOW exactly did I take care of her?" I asked, trying desperately to remember what had happened. "And, um . . . WHO are you guys?"

"Well, we're Munchkins, and we attend Fairy Tale Land Middle School along with all the other storybook characters. MacKenzie, the Wicked Witch of the West, always stole our munchies," Chip explained. "Until YOU came along!"

"MUNCHKINS?! You're kidding me!" I said, glancing around the room for hidden cameras. "Okay! I'm being PUNKED by Chloe and Zoey for some TV show or something! Right?!"

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"It's very possible. But I don't know any Munchkins named Chloe or Zoey. Are they Regals, Renegades, or Rogues?"

"HUH?!" I blinked in confusion. "I don't have any idea what you're talking—"

"You know! The stuff we learned in Introduction to Storybook Family Genealogy," Chip said.

"Regals are royalty, like kings, queens, princes, and princesses," said Lollipop Girl.

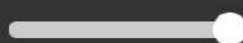
"Renegades are the brave adventurers who hang out in the woods," said a guy munching on a slice of pizza.

"And the Rogues are magic users, like the witch!" said a girl with a mouthful of cotton candy.

"And the fairies, too! They're the caretakers of Fairy Tale Land!" explained Chip. "Us Munchkins are Renegades."

"You guys CAN'T be serious!" I laughed nervously.

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"We're VERY serious. As a heart attack. Totally!"
the group answered solemnly.

My laughter grew a little more shrill and jittery.

For some reason this whole story sounded vaguely familiar.

Then it hit me!

OMG! Maybe I was in the story of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*!

Only THESE Munchkins actually munched munchies?!!

Or it was very possible that I'd gone completely INSANE!

"No way!" I gasped as my laughter turned into a frantic sob. "This CAN'T be real! OMG! I got hit in the face with a ball by MacKenzie, and now I'm suffering from BRAIN DAMAGE!!" I shrieked hysterically.

86

Lollipop Girl gave me a big hug.

"Don't worry! That mean witch won't bother you anymore. You really gave her a licking!" She giggled.

"Yeah!" Chip chimed in. "You whipped her butt like mashed potatoes!"

"You totally creamed her!" said a boy with a drippy ice-cream cone. "Just like this . . . !"

He demonstrated by greedily gobbling the entire thing in one bite, and then belched loudly.

I gaped in horror, imagining his scoop of Chunky Monkey ice cream as MacKenzie's head.

Sure, I sort of hated that girl a little bit. But I'd NEVER go cannibal and bite her head off!

Although I was pretty sure her head was completely hollow.

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Just saying!

"What exactly did I do to her?" I asked nervously.
"I don't remember a thing!"

"Well, the witch was standing right here, bullying us
and stealing our snacks. Until you fell out of the sky
and CLOBBERED her!" said Pizza Boy.

Okay, I DID kind of remember the falling part.

But nothing about a WITCH.

"You were AWESOME!!" Chip gushed. "You landed
right on top of her! We actually took pictures.
Wanna see them?"

"Um, SURE!" I answered.

He pulled some photos out of his jacket pocket.

"Here's a pic of the witch bullying us. Those wedgies
were pretty brutal. . . ."

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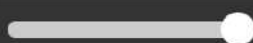


THE WICKED WITCH OF THE WEST,
BULLYING MUNCHKINS INTO GIVING UP
THEIR MUNCHIES!!

I couldn't believe my eyes!

Mackenzie was dressed in a very fashionable witch
outfit and torturing two Munchkins with double
wedgies! OUCH @!!

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Chip continued. "And here you are, valiantly coming to our rescue!" . . .



ME, FALLING OUT OF THE SKY,
ABOUT TO CLOBBER
THE WICKED WITCH OF THE WEST

"And then . . . POW!!" Chip shouted excitedly. "You took her out and saved us Munchkins!!" . . .

90

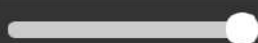


ME, CLOBBERING THE WITCH!

OMG! It was true! I'd actually landed on the Wicked Witch of the West!!!

I would not have believed that ANY of this had happened if I had not seen the photos with my very own eyes.

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"And the final pic is of me and my friends getting even with the witch," Chip explained. "As you can see, I'm really good at drawing mustaches!" . . .



THE MUNCHKINS, DRAWING A MUSTACHE
AND ASSORTED GRAFFITI ON THE FACE
OF THE WICKED WITCH OF THE WEST

OMG! That photo of her just lying there pushed me over the edge, and I TOTALLY lost it!!

92

"OH NO! I've KILLED MacKenzie!" I wailed. "It was totally an accident. OMG! She's . . . DEAD!! Where's her b-body?!"

"Probably in the school nurse's office," Chip answered. "She woke up right before you did. She's NOT dead. Just REALLY ticked off!"

"Thank goodness! At least I didn't kill her!" I muttered, feeling relieved.

I was NOT a murderer! Woo-hoo ☺!

"Nope! You just ripped her skinny jeans, smeared her lip gloss, broke three fingernails, tore out five hair extensions, and knocked her out of her designer shoes!" giggled Lollipop Girl.

For MacKenzie, suffering all of that public humiliation was probably WORSE than murder!!

That's when I noticed the cutest pair of platform sneakers lying right in the middle of the gym floor. . . .

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THE WICKED WITCH OF THE WEST'S
SUPERCUTE DESIGNER SHOES!

I had to admit, those platform sneakers were to
DIE for!

"Anyway, the witch was really angry. She said she

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was going to hop on her broom and zoom off to
the salon for an emergency appointment to get
her hair and nails done, right after she visited
the school nurse," Chip explained.

"You probably would have been better off
accidentally killing her. Because now she's probably
going to try and kill YOU!!" a girl with a cupeake
said sadly as she wiped away a tear.

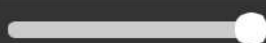
"Kill you dead! So sad!" the Munchkins murmured
solemnly among themselves.

"Just great! The last thing I need right now is a
wicked witch hunting me down. I just want to go
HOME!" I whined.

"Well, you could always ask the Good Witch of the
North to help you!" Lollipop Girl said. "She's nice,
friendly, and powerful."

"I'm going to need all the help I can get. The Wicked
Witch of the West sounds like a real drama queen,"
I said, starting to worry.

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Suddenly there was a flash of light, and everyone pointed toward the ceiling. . . .

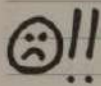
"Look! There she is right now!" Chip exclaimed.

"WHO? The Wicked Witch . . . ?!" I gulped.

She was the **LAST** person I wanted to see!

It was **DEFINITELY** time for me to leave.

Where is a **TORNADO** when you really need one?



96

WHICH WITCH IS WHICH?!

I stared in amazement as colorful sprinkles rained down around the room and then disappeared into the air.

I gasped when a little girl appeared, wearing a pink Princess Sugar Plum costume and a **HUGE** crown. She was carrying a wand that was almost taller than she was.

"**BRIANNA?!!**" I shrieked excitedly. "OMG! I'm **SO** happy to see you! What are you doing in my gym class? Do Mom and Dad know you're here?"

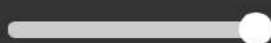
"Hey, slow your roll, sister," Brianna said, glaring at me. "I don't think we've met before!"

"Of course we've **MET!** You're my **SISTER!** Don't you recognize me? You just called me your sister a second ago!"

"Actually, **THAT** was sarcasm!" Brianna said, rather, um . . . sarcastically.

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"Well, you LOOK just like my little sister!" I said, folding my arms and eyeing her suspiciously.

"Sorry, but I'm NOT! I'm Brianna the Fairy Godmother, at your service!" she said, and curtsied. "I also work part-time as the Good Witch of the North on Tuesdays and Thursdays." She handed me a business card written sloppily in crayon. It said . . .

WISHES & ENCHANTMENTS BY BRIANNA

You dream, I deliver—Since 1583 ♦

Brianna the Fairy Godmother •

a.k.a. Good Witch of the North ♦

President & CEO •

(555) 555-0111 ♦

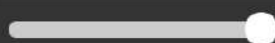
Then she gave me a big, warm smile. . . .

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BRIANNA, THE FAIRY GODMOTHER
AND THE GOOD WITCH OF THE NORTH!!

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"Wow! You've been in business for a long time!" I exclaimed.

"That's right. I've got centuries' worth of experience. And I look really good for my age too, don't I?" she said, admiring her reflection in her wand. "Anyway, let's talk about YOU! My new client!" She pushed several buttons on the base of her wand.

Suddenly the star dinged and lit up, just like a smartphone.

She read her wand and then stared at me as she tapped her chin in thought.

"Hmm. This says you've traveled to our world from an alternate universe. And it looks to me like you were knocked unconscious at some point," Brianna announced matter-of-factly.

"Wow! How did you know that?!" I asked, amazed.

"Simple. My smartwand calculated where you're from. The other part was just my lucky guess. OMG! What

100

happened? It looks like you got hit in the face with a shovel! OUCH!"

That's when I just glared at that girl in complete disgust.

I could NOT believe she was actually talking about my face like that right to my . . . um, FACE.

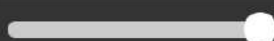
There was an awkward silence.

Then Brianna giggled nervously. "So, Nikki, what can I help you with today? Anything you want, just ask! However, I must warn you that temporary makeovers only come with a twelve-hour warranty."

"Well, right now I just want to go home! I'm supposed to babysit my sister later today. And I have a really bad feeling I'm going to have a very angry wicked witch hunting me down very soon."

Brianna giggled. "Yeah! You fell right out of the sky, and BAM!! It was HILARIOUS! I saw the video on WhoTube. It's already gone viral!"

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"Wait, don't you mean YouTube?" I asked.

"No, it's WHOTUBE!"

"But the correct name is YOUTUBE."

"No! It's WhoTube, Miss Smarty-Pants!" Brianna said, rolling her eyes at me.

"Whatever!" I answered.

"Now, pay close attention! The BEST way to get home is to go to the office. Once there, you're going to ask for an appointment to see the Great and Powerful Wizard of—"

"OZ!" I interrupted. "It's Oz, right? I already know the story!"

"WRONG!" Brianna snapped. "It's the Great and Powerful Wizard of ODD!"

"ODD?! Don't you mean OZ?" I asked.

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"No! It's ODD! And please DON'T interrupt me again! If anyone has the power to get you home, it's the Wizard of Odd, also known as Principal Winston. He's got a thick pad of PASSES that can magically transport you anywhere with the mere stroke of his pen. But be careful, because there are also detentions and suspensions lurking around that place. Got it?"

"Got it!" I answered eagerly.

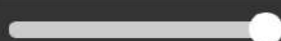
"Also, I'm going to give you this pair of shoes. They have the power to—"

"I know the story!" I interrupted. "Transport me HOME! Right?"

"WRONG!! They have the power to magically style you from head to toe in one cute outfit!" Brianna explained.

"Oh! Is that all those shoes will do?" I asked, a little disappointed. "I was hoping for a pair of those glittery magic slippers like Dorothy's."

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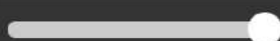
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"The Wicked Witch of the West is very vain. HER shoes don't transport. They just STYLE. Sorry!" Brianna said.

Then she dramatically pointed her wand at the platform sneakers.

"Please, everyone needs to stand back at least twelve feet from my wand. It's just a safety precaution to limit your exposure to random magic particles."

Everyone in the room scooted back a bit, and Brianna began a magic chant.

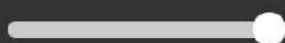
"Platform sneakers,
fashionably sweet!
Find your new home
on Nikki's, um . . .
STREET!"

Then she dramatically waved her magic wand, and . . .

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Absolutely *NOTHING* happened! @!!

I sighed and tried not to roll my eyes.

Gravely concerned about this recent turn of events, all the Munchkins spoke in hushed tones among themselves.

Brianna, obviously embarrassed, impatiently smacked her wand on the palm of her hand a few times.

"Come *ON!* I just put new batteries in this thing yesterday!" she muttered.

I didn't want to seem obnoxious or anything, but my guess was that her magic spell was a little off.

"Um, do you think maybe you should have said 'FEET,' instead of 'STREET'? It's just a suggestion. You're totally the expert on magic here!" I said, shrugging my shoulders.

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Brianna wrinkled up her nose at me. "I already thought of *THAT*, Miss Smarty-Pants! So don't tell me how to do my job." She cleared her throat rather loudly and tried the magic chant again. . . .

*"Platform sneakers,
fashionably sweet!*

*Find your new home
on Nikki's . . .*

FEET!"

Brianna waved her wand, and this time the shoes magically appeared on my feet.

"They belonged to the Wicked Witch of the West, but now they're all yours!" Brianna beamed proudly.

"Thanks! But won't she be a little irritated that I'm wearing her shoes?" I asked.

"Actually, she's going to be *FURIOUS!* But let's face it. You need them a lot more than she does!" Brianna said matter-of-factly.

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"Well, if the shoes won't help me get home, WHY do I even need them?" I grumbled.

"Because your old sneakers STANK! When was the last time you washed those things? They smelled like sardines and baby burp!" Brianna said, fanning her nose.

Even though I was highly insulted, I had to admit Brianna had a really good point.

My mom was forever complaining about exactly the same thing.

Even though I wore them daily in gym class, it had probably been a year since I had washed those sneakers.

I've been needing a new pair of shoes for gym for quite a while now.

Anyway, the new shoes were a PERFECT fit.

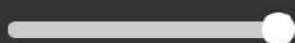
And they looked even cuter on. . . .

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ME, ADMIRING MY NEW SHOES! (WELL, ACTUALLY, THE WITCH'S SHOES)

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I thanked my fairy godmother for her help and then said good-bye to all my new Munchkin friends. Then I kind of stood there, waiting patiently for Brianna to use her magic wand thingy again.

"Okay, so what's the problem NOW?" she huffed

"Um . . . aren't you supposed to help me magically find the Wizard of Odd? You know, like in the story."

"NO! But it looks like YOU'RE trying to tell ME how to do my job again!" Brianna snarked.

"Of course not! I—I was just wondering how I'm ever going to find the wizard if I don't have a yellow brick road to follow. Or maybe you can whip up one of those GPS thingies."

Brianna rolled her eyes.

"Simple! His office is where it's ALWAYS been. Just go out this door and down the hall. It's the first door on the right!"

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"Um . . . okay. Thanks!" I mumbled, feeling kind of stupid.

Then I turned and rushed toward the gym door.

I planned to go straight to the Fairy Tale Land Middle School office and find the Wizard of Odd. He'd give me a pass to go home, and then I'd call my mom to pick me up. She'd take one look at my sad, puppy-dog eyes, and soon I'd be snuggled in my comfy bed, eating a pint of Ben & Jerry's ice cream with an ice pack on my face.

Yep! I was starting to feel better already.

My day had been one never-ending horror story. But soon my very weird adventure in Fairy Tale Land was going to have a HAPPY ENDING!

😊!!

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WHERE AM I?

OMG! I'm totally FREAKING out right now! Things around here are getting more bizarre by the minute!

I exited the gym door just like my fairy godmother, Brianna, had instructed. But there wasn't a hallway outside that door!

NOPE! Just a DARK, CREEPY FOREST!!!
😱!!! And, unfortunately, I'm very ALLERGIC to dark, creepy forests!

I gasped and blinked a few times just to make sure my eyes weren't playing tricks on me.

Then, in a panic, I turned around and tried to rush back to the safety of the gym. But THAT was no longer an option. The door had disappeared into thin air! 😱!!

With the full moon, the huge trees cast spooky shadows that made it even more difficult to see in the darkness.

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I felt like I was in one of those scary slasher movies that my parents won't let me watch. However, on a more positive note, my enchanted shoes worked like a charm 😊!

They magically changed my drab gym clothes into a SUPERcute sky-blue dress with a white apron, tights, and shiny black Mary Jane shoes.

Which, for some reason, looked vaguely familiar. . . .

Then it occurred to me that I was dressed just like my favorite storybook character, Alice from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*! SQUEEEE 😊!!!

But I digress. . . .

Suddenly I had the very creepy sensation that someone was watching me. As the wind started to howl, I spotted a pair of sinister glowing red eyes staring right at me 😱!!

That's when I screamed and started running through the woods as fast as I could. . . .

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I wandered through the forest, totally lost, for what seemed like . . .

FOREVER!

Then cold, hungry, and frightened, I collapsed in exhaustion in front of a huge rock.

How was I ever going to get out of this place?!

That's when I suddenly remembered that I had a fairy godmother.

THANK GOODNESS ☺!!

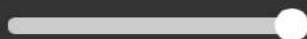
I cleared my throat and whispered loudly,
"Um . . . Brianna! Can you help me? PLEASE!"

But there was no response.

So I tried yelling as loud as I could. . . .

"BRIANNA!!! HELP!!"

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Once upon a dork





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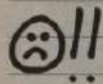


But the only response I got was a very peculiar echo:
"BRIANNA HELP! BRIANNA HELP! BRIANNA HELP!"

It quickly became very apparent to me that I was in
this calamity all alone.

NOTE TO SELF:

Find a NEW fairy godmother!!



I took three deep breaths and tried to calm myself.

The last thing I needed to do right then was have a
complete meltdown.

Especially since I'd already had three or four today.

I finally came to the logical conclusion that it would
probably be easier to find my way out of the forest
in the morning.

Assuming, of course, I SURVIVED the night ☺!

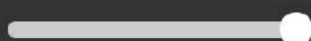
116



ME, LOST AND ALONE
IN THE DARK, CREEPY FOREST!!

So I just sat there next to that big rock, staring
into the darkness, hugging my knees and rocking

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back and forth, wishing I was back home with my OWN family, in my OWN room, snuggled in my OWN comfy bed.

And hoping those scary red eyes staring back at me didn't belong to a ferocious animal with really sharp teeth that ATE kids who got slammed in the face during gym, woke up in another world, and ended up lost in the woods in the middle of the night.

Then I finally fell into a deep, fretful sleep.

☹!!

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FURRY AND FEATHERED FRIENDS!

I awoke the next morning to the warmth of the sun on my face and the happy sounds of birds chirping.

At first I was dazed and confused.

Why did my pillow feel as hard as a rock? And how did an assortment of furry and feathered critters get into my bedroom?!

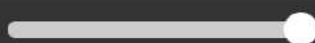
That's when all the memories came flooding back into my mind like a tidal wave. I was stuck in some strange storybook land and needed to get back home!

I stretched, got to my feet, and looked around.

The forest looked nothing WHATSOEVER like I remembered from last night.

I couldn't help but smile. I felt just like a Disney princess or something. . . .

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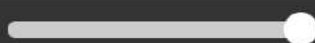
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ME, WITH MY NEW WOODLAND
CREATURE FRIENDS!

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OMG! All those adorable little animals were really friendly. I felt like dancing and singing with them, just like in those sappy movies.

And get this! They even brought me an assortment of fruits, nuts, and berries for breakfast. Which made me VERY happy because I was literally STARVING!!

Yesterday I missed breakfast, lunch, AND dinner. OMG! I was SO hungry I could have chewed the bark right off of a tree!

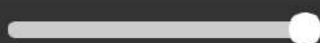
I ate the delicious treats and stuffed the leftovers in my pockets.

Next, I happily thanked all my newfound friends for their generosity.

No longer exhausted or hungry, I set out to find my way back home.



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INTO THE WOODS

One thing was for sure—I definitely liked the friendly, happy daytime woods a lot better than the dark, creepy nighttime woods.

Somehow, I had to find the Wizard of Odd. But I doubted that his office was in the middle of the woods.

I tried not to think about the “what-ifs.”

What if I didn’t find the wizard?

What if I couldn’t find my way back home?

What if I was stuck in this place ... **FOREVER?**

About ten minutes into my journey, I stumbled upon a well-worn, winding path and decided to follow it.

I hadn’t traveled more than a half mile when I made the most **AMAZING** discovery . . .

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It was the cutest little cottage I had ever seen!

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And it was obviously inhabited, because of the manicured lawn and flowers. I was sure the people living there could help me!

They probably knew the Wizard of Odd. Or knew someone who knew the Wizard of Odd. Or knew someone who knew someone who knew the Wizard of Odd.

HOPEFULLY!

And if they had a phone, I could call my mom and tell her not to worry because I'd be home soon.

I felt really happy and relieved that this whole FIASCO was going to be over.

I excitedly ran to the door and knocked. But no one answered. I knocked again even harder, but still no answer. Then I pounded kind of desperately.

That's when, to my surprise, the door slowly swung open. I poked my head inside.

"Hello? Is anyone home?" I called out.

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Since it was kind of an emergency, I stepped inside to have a look around. . . .



SOMEONE HAD EATEN THE SMALLEST BOWL OF PORRIDGE. . . .

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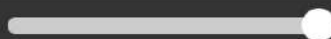
SOMEONE HAD SAT IN AND BROKEN THE
SMALLEST CHAIR...

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AND THAT SOMEONE WAS STILL SLEEPING IN
THE SMALLEST BED!!

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Once upon a dork





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It was a young girl about my age with beautiful curly blond hair. But when I leaned over and took a closer look at her face, I totally freaked out.

"CHLOE?! OMG! CHLOE!!" I screamed, shaking her awake. "It's me, Nikki! I'm SO happy to see you!"

Startled, the poor girl opened her eyes and sat straight up in the bed, staring at me like I was a lunatic.

"Chloe, it's ME! Nikki! How did YOU get here?" I shouted. "And when did you change your hair? It's really cute!"

"Actually, my name isn't Chloe. It's Goldilocks! And I don't believe we've ever met before," the girl said as she looked me up and down.

Then a smile slowly spread across her face. "Wait a minute! I DO recognize you! Blue dress and white apron—you're Dorothy from *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, right?! You sat in front of me in Managing Dangerous Fairy Tale Animals: Lions, Tigers, and Bears class, right?!"

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"Actually, no! I'm sorry, but—"

"No? Are you sure?" Goldilocks said, squinting at me. "Hmm. Now I remember! We were in the same study group for Surviving the Dark, Dangerous Forest: Tips and Tactics! And wasn't Professor Huntsman HAWT? I wouldn't mind flunking that final exam just to be in HIS class again," she gushed. "Right, Dorothy?"

"Sorry, but I'M NOT DOROTHY!!" I said.

Goldilocks stared at me and tapped her chin in thought.

Finally, she smiled again.

"Of course NOT! Everyone was always mixing up you and Dorothy. You're Alice from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, right? Blue dress, white apron! You and Dorothy are practically twins. I think you and I both had the class Eating on a Budget in Fairy Tale Land: Why Pay When You Can Beg, Borrow, and Steal, and Eat for FREE?"

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"Um . . . actually, I'm NOT—"

"And how could I forget!" Goldilocks interrupted. "For your class project, you swallowed 'Drink Me!' juice from that little bottle. Then you grew to ten feet and then shrank to ten inches. It was AWESOME! You totally deserved that A-plus, Alice!"



GOLDILOCKS, RAMBLING ON AND ON ABOUT STUFF AND CALLING ME ALICE 😊!!

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Okay, now I was starting to get a little frustrated. I wasn't Dorothy OR Alice!

"Well, my outfit is kind of a complicated story. I might be dressed like Alice, but I'm really—"

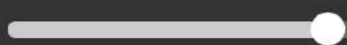
"You know what, Alice, I think you should petition the Fairy Tale Land Council to change your dress color. Now, yellow is way too bright. And green is way too dark! But PINK! That would be JUST right! And then people wouldn't always confuse you with Dorothy. So, do you like porridge? There are two bowls left on the table. I think I'm getting hungry again. . . ."

OMG!! Goldilocks was REEEALLY talkative!!

"To be honest, Goldilocks, I don't think that's such a good idea. What if the bears are hungry too? They might be a little upset when they come home and find all of their porridge gone," I said, starting to worry about that very issue myself.

"Bears?! Did you just say 'BEARS?!'" Goldilocks gasped, looking very alarmed.

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"Yes, I did! The Three Bears live in this house!" I explained. "And if I remember the story correctly, they'll be arriving here any minute now."

"Are you sure BEARS live here? I was told by one of the Rogues that this place was a brand-new bed-and-breakfast and I could just drop in anytime since no reservations were required. But now it's starting to make sense. The service is bad, the food is bland, the furniture is cheap, the support staff is nonexistent, and my bed is a little lumpy. As a hotel this place STINKS! Next time, I'm staying at the Faircott Hotel."

Goldilocks COMPLAINED an awful lot too.

"A Rogue? That's a magic user, right?" I said.

"It was the Wicked Witch of the West, actually. Her name is MacKenzie and she's in my Survey of Fairy Tale Land History class. Rumpelstiltskin is the most BORING history teacher EVER! Sleeping Beauty pretty much snoozes through ALL of his classes. Although, to be honest, that girl snoozes through EVERYTHING!"

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"Wow, it sounds like a really fascinating class!" I said.

"Well, it's NOT! After the Great War, Fairy Tale Land was divided into three groups. The REGALS are all of the royalty. They're the lucky ones with perfect lives! And they always get a happily ever after. They have SUPERactive social lives with lots of parties, balls, and weddings. Hey, I'd love to have gourmet food, servants, and a closet full of gorgeous silk dresses and be pampered all day. Most of them are a little spoiled, if you ask me!"

"Yeah, it does sound like they have a lot of fun! I can see why you feel that way," I said.

"The RENEGADES are adventurers. They're courageous and try to help others. That's what I am. But I'm BORED out of my SKULL! If I have to wander through another forest or deal with another mangy wild animal, I'm going to SCREAM! My life is VERY stressful. The insects are annoying, and have you ever tried to get the scent of a SKUNK out of your hair? It's next to impossible! And look at the clothes we get! I've had this ugly cotton dress

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for the past two years. I'm just DYING to wear a velvet dress with red sparkly shoes for a day. And a Renegade's love life is nonexistent, unless you're really into the outdoorsy types."

I felt bad for Goldilocks. Although, to be honest, she sounded a lot like what I would call a dork.

"And then there are the ROGUES. A lot of them are selfish magic users obsessed with power and prestige. They have no qualms about hurting others to get ahead. And they're VAIN! They love titles like the 'Evil' this or the 'Wicked' that. Their lives are filled with danger, drama, and intrigue.

"The fairies are magic users too, but they are nice. They're responsible for keeping Fairy Tale Land in existence. Basically, we ALL just try to get along and tell our stories."

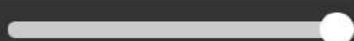
"Well, I don't know why the Wicked Witch of the West would mislead you, Goldilocks," I said solemnly. "But this place ISN'T a B AND B! And I think we need to get the HECK out of here. FAST!"

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ME, EXPLAINING TO GOLDILOCKS
THAT WE SHOULD PROBABLY LEAVE BEFORE
THE THREE BEARS COME HOME!!

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Plus, I'm also SUPERallergic to very hungry BEARS!

Suddenly we heard a loud, angry growl from the kitchen.

"Somebody's been EATING my porridge!!" roared Papa Bear.

"Somebody's been eating MY porridge too!!" snarled Mama Bear.

"Somebody's been eating MY porridge! And they ate it all up!" wailed Baby Bear.

Goldilocks and I just froze and stared at each other in horror! The bears were back home! 😱!! Next, the loud, angry growl was even CLOSER to us, from the living room.

"Somebody's been SITTING in my chair!" roared Papa Bear.

"Somebody's been sitting in MY chair too," snarled Mama Bear.

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"And somebody sat in MY chair and broke it into pieces!" sobbed Baby Bear.

"Alice, what are we going to do?" Goldilocks whisper-shouted. "I haven't yet taken the class Angry Animals with Very Sharp Teeth: Up Close and Personal!"

"Well, um . . . we can always hide?" I said, shrugging.

"Where?!! Under THIS bed?!! That's the FIRST place they are going to look for us!" Goldilocks said, rolling her eyes.

"YES! Under the bed!" I whispered. "We don't have a choice!"

We quickly straightened Baby Bear's bed so it wouldn't be obvious that someone had been sleeping in it. That's when I realized in horror that I had accidentally dropped some of my personal belongings on the bed.

Goldilocks pointed and motioned frantically, but it was TOO late for me to try to retrieve my stuff.

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We were **DOOMED** 😞! Goldilocks and I quickly dove under the bed. And when we cautiously peeked out, the bear family was standing in the bedroom just inches away from our hiding place...



GOLDILOCKS AND ME,
PEEKING OUT FROM UNDER THE BED!!

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"Somebody's been **SLEEPING** in my bed!!" roared Papa Bear.

"Somebody's been sleeping in **MY** bed too!!" snarled Mama Bear.

"Somebody's been sleeping in **MY** bed!" cried Baby Bear. Then he pointed excitedly. "Mama Bear! Papa Bear! Look what's **STILL** there!!"

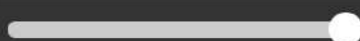
Baby Bear's cute little fuzzy toes were so close that his fur was actually tickling my nose. **OMG!** I was trying my hardest **NOT** to **SNEEZE!** I was like, **AH! AH! AH! CH—!**

That's when Goldilocks quickly reached over and grabbed the end of my nose. The good news was that she stopped my sneeze 😊! The bad news was that the pressure from **NOT** sneezing almost ruptured my eyeballs! **OUCH** 😞!!

The bears froze and just **STARED** at the bed!

"Well, look at that!" bellowed Papa Bear.

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"Unbelievable!" shouted Mama Bear.

"LET'S EAT THEM!!" cried Baby Bear.

This is what the Three Bears found. . . .



THE THREE BEARS, FINDING MY YUMMY
STASH OF NUTS, BERRIES, AND FRUIT!

140

"I have a great idea, Papa Bear!" cooed Mama Bear. "Why don't you and Baby Bear go fix that broken chair while I warm up our porridge and bake us a delicious apple blueberry pie with a honey nut glaze!!" she gushed.

Then all three bears happily lumbered back into the kitchen and got busy with their chores.

As soon as the coast was clear (and the bears were greedily snarfing down a yummy pie), Goldilocks and I climbed out of a window and disappeared into the woods.

I can't really explain it, but for some reason I really like her, even though she's kind of ditzy.

Maybe it's because she looks and acts so much like my BFF Chloe. Minus the curly blond hair.

I'm STILL pretty anxious to go home. But I also want to know more about the ROGUES.

One of them obviously tried to set up my new friend, Chloelocks! Er . . . I mean, GOLDILOCKS!

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Thank goodness those bears decided to eat Mama Bear's freshly baked PIE as a midday snack instead of GOLDILOCKS!

YIKES!!

SOMEONE wants Goldilocks DEAD! And that someone is MacKenzie, the Wicked Witch of the West!

I can't even take a wacky trip to Fairy Tale Land without that girl showing up and making my life miserable.

And I'm SURE she's plotting some over-the-top diabolical plan! Which means the Munchkins, Goldilocks, and all of Fairy Tale Land might possibly be in great danger.

And since I'm basically STUCK here in Fairy Tale Land Cray-Cray Land for the time being, I don't have a choice but to try to stop her.

☹!!

142

BACK INTO THE WOODS!

Goldilocks and I quickly became friends. I told her my story and explained that I was desperately trying to get back home.

Although she personally didn't know the Wizard of Odd, she volunteered to help me find him. Of course I was REALLY happy to hear that news! Goldilocks said it was the least she could do after I had saved her life.

However, first she had to file an incident report with the Fairy Tale Land Council about the Three Bears.

She also explained that a powerful magic user had recently begun interfering with fairy tales and that the Fairy Tale Land Council wanted the person stopped before serious damage was done.

We agreed to meet in one hour at a place called the Mad Hatter Tea Shop. It was located in a small village at the edge of the forest about a mile away.

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I had been on the path for about fifteen minutes when I noticed a figure ahead of me in the distance. It was a girl, and she was wearing a bright red cape with a hood and carrying a small basket.

Maybe she knew the Wizard of Odd. I figured it wouldn't hurt to ask.

I took off, running after her as fast as I could. But soon she disappeared into a small cottage.

I was like, JUST GREAT 😞!!

Trespassing on private property was fast becoming a dangerous new hobby of mine. I had barely survived the run-in with the bear family.

However, since it was kind of an emergency, I decided to go inside.

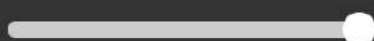
When I finally got a glimpse of the girl, I couldn't believe my eyes! She looked just like my BFF ZOEY!!

144



Well, okay. IF Zoey was wearing a funky red cape, a retro dress, cool ankle boots, and was carrying a cute wicker basket handbag.

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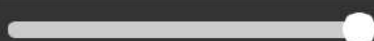
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Apparently, the girl was visiting her grandmother.

But then their convo got really . . . um, WEIRD!!

Even weirder than the chats between ME and MY grandmother (which are usually pretty weird!).

"Grandma, what big EYES you have!"

"The better to SEE you with, my dear."

"Grandma, what big EARS you have!"

"The better to HEAR you with, my dear."

Anyway, it was quite obvious that Red Riding Hood needed glasses or something, because her GRANDMA looked like no grandma I'd ever seen before.

I don't mean to be rude or impolite, but her grandma was definitely a bit on the homely side.

Okay, I'll be honest. She was a HOT MESS!! . . .

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ME, NOTICING THAT GRANDMA
NEEDED TO SHAVE . . . HER ENTIRE BODY!!

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"Grandma, what a big NOSE you have!"

"The better to SMELL you with, my dear!"

"Grandma, what big TEETH you have!"

"The better to EAT you with!! GRRRRR!!!"

And with that, the wolf leaped across the bed,
right at Red Riding Hood.

Okay, I knew there was supposed to be a huntsman
or some guy who shows up at the last minute to
save the day in the fairy tale. But he was nowhere
in sight.

"Fairy Godmother! Please HELP!" I screamed,
praying she would appear. But no luck.

Snarling and gnashing his sharp teeth, that wolf
darted right past the door I was hiding behind.

He was about to pounce on poor, helpless Red Riding
Hood and rip her to shreds. . . .

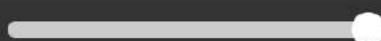
148



THE BIG BAD WOLF, POUNCING ON
POOR RED RIDING HOOD!

That's when I completely PANICKED and did the
first (STUPID) thing that popped into my head. . . .

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ME, GRABBING THE WOLF'S TAIL
AND PULLING IT WITH ALL MY MIGHT
IN A DESPERATE ATTEMPT TO SAVE
RED RIDING HOOD!!

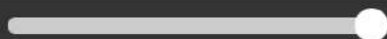
150

But I guess I must have pulled a little too hard or
something, because I heard a loud *SNAP*, and then...



ME AND THE WOLF, FALLING OVER
WHEN HIS TAIL SNAPS OFF!

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Once upon a dork





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ME AND THE WOLF,
BOTH VERY SHOCKED AND SURPRISED
THAT HIS TAIL WAS IN MY HAND ☹!

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Of course, after the wolf got over the initial shock, he got an attitude about the whole thing. Even though it was quite obviously an accident.

"Look what you've done, you . . . you MONSTER!!" he yelled at me. "I'm lucky to have survived such a vicious attack. You're a psychopath, and you need help!"

"Oh, REALLY?! So I'M the monster here?!" I shouted at him. "Just a minute ago YOU were the one bragging about your big teeth and trying to EAT Red Riding Hood. After dressing up as her GRANDMA, no less! Sorry, dude, but YOU'RE the one who needs some SERIOUS counseling."

Then he got right up in my face, so close I could smell his foul Big Bad Wolf breath.

Suddenly I totally understood how he had huffed and puffed and blew down the houses of those poor Three Little Pigs.

OMG! His breath was THAT bad!!! ☹!!

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"Listen, Dorothy, if you know what's good for you, you'll stay out of MY neck of the woods!! Or else! And that's NOT a threat, it's a PROMISE!!" he growled at me. Literally.

"I'm NOT Dorothy! And YOU'RE just a big BULLY!"

"Okay then, um . . . ALICE!! You'd better watch your step!"

"I'm NOT Alice, either!" I shot back.

"Well, you should be! You're wearing her UGLY dress. I personally wouldn't be caught DEAD in that thing, especially with those awful shoes!"

"Hey, have you looked in the mirror lately, Wolf Boy? You're wearing a granny gown with ugly flowers on it, and a matching bonnet. I wouldn't be giving out fashion advice if I were you," I huffed.

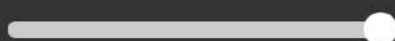
Then he rolled his eyes at me, snatched his tail out of my hand, and stomped right out the front door.

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ME AND RED RIDING HOOD,
GIGGLING ABOUT THE TAIL FIASCO!

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"You actually saved my life! How can I ever thank you, Dorothy?! I mean, er . . . Alice! Or whatever your name is . . ."

I was totally surprised when she gave me a big hug.

"Here, would you like a free lunch? It's a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Grandma—I mean, the wolf—didn't eat it."

"I'm really happy I was able to help you," I said. "And thanks for offering me lunch. But after yesterday, I'm just not that into PB and J sandwiches anymore. It's a long and complicated story. But do you know where I can get a triple cheeseburger, extra-large fries, and a supersize drink?"

"My! What a BIG appetite YOU have!! You could be one of the Three Little Pigs!" she blurted out.

I just ignored that little comment. Something else was kind of bugging me.

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"Um, why didn't you realize that the wolf WASN'T your grandma?" I asked her.

"Actually, I wasn't visiting MY grandma. I was just delivering a basket of food for the grandmother of one of the Rogues," Red Riding Hood explained.

"Well, whoever sent you here is either genetically related to the canine family or was trying to turn you into an afternoon snack. I'm really worried that someone is out to get both you and Goldilocks!"

That's when Red Riding Hood gasped and said, "Goldilocks is a good friend of mine! We're both in danger?" Then she clutched her heart and shrieked, "Oh! My! Gosh!"

Someone had actually tried to kill her, and it seemed to be FINALLY sinking in.

But then she blurted out, "MY, what big FEET you have, Dorothy! I mean, Alice!"

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